

Caueat Lector.

A SERMON
Concerning *Jn. 1. 9*
CONFESSION
OF
SINNES,

And
THE POWER
OF
ABSOLVTION.

Preached by Mr. *axton* Sp. of *Queenes*
Colledge in CAMBRIDGE.

Jn. 1. John. 1. 9.



LONDON,
Printed by R. Bishop for Iohn Clark dwelling
under Saint Peters Church in Corne-hill,

1 6 3 7.

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Preached by Mr. J. S. of
 College in Cambridge

Feb. 1. 1671

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In Dei Nomine, AMEN.

1 Iohn 1. 9.

If we confesse our sinnes, hee is faithfull and just to forgive us our sinnes, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousnesse.

IF we say that we have no sinne, wee sinne in saying so: for we give God the lye, ver. 10. who by his Prophet hath said, *there is none that doth good, and sinneth not,* and by his Apostle, *that in many things we offend all:* and we make our selves lyars, ver. 8. if wee say that wee have no sinne, there is no truth in us; *who can say I have made my heart cleane, I am pure from my sinne?* If any proud Pharisee doth, he deceives himselfe, saith Saint Iohn. *Nam si non dixeris Deo quod es, damnat in te Deus quod inueniet,* if we deny those sinnes we have, God that sees them will condemne us for them. A vain-glorious Pharisee his God *I thanke thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, &c.* will not justifie us before God. The poore Publicanes humble confession, with a God be mercifull

Prov. 20.

Confession of sinnes, and

Divis.

to me a sinner, is the onely way to pardon and forgivenesse: for if wee confesse our sinnes, he is faithfull and just to forgive us our sinnes, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousnesse.

1. In which words we have, First, *Confessionis Necessitatem*, without confession there's no remission: if we confesse our sinnes God will forgive them, not otherwise.
2. Secondly, *Confessionis Fructus*, the fruits of confession, first, *Condemnabit Deus*, if we confesse our sinnes, God will forgive us our sinnes: Secondly,
2. *Purgabit ab omni iniquitate*, if we confesse our sins, God will purge us from all iniquity, he will forgive us our sinnes non imputando poenam, by remitting the punishment due to them, and then purgabit maculam infundendo gratiam, he will purge us from all iniquity by the infusion of his grace; and that, 1. *Quia fidelis*, because he is faithfull, he hath promised that who so confesseth his sinnes, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy: so that if we confesse our sins, his mercy will forgive them, will purge us from all iniquity, because he is faithfull. 2. *quia justus*, Our blessed Saviour by his death and sufferings hath made a full satisfaction for all our sinnes, he hath paid an infinite price, for a pardon for all those that will confesse their sins: so then if we confesse our sins, he will forgive them, because he is just.

Prov. 28. 13.

1st.

Doct.

Levit. 5. 5.

First, of the first part, the necessity of Confession; if we confesse, God will forgive, not otherwise. Confession was alwayes the way to Absolution, and never was pardon promised, but upon these termes, if we confesse. Thus it ranne in the Law; And it shall bee when he shall be guilty in any of these things, that hee shall

the power of Absolution.

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shall confesse that he hath sinned in that thing: and the Priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sinne. Thus here in the Gospell; if we confesse our sinnes, God will forgive them. This *si confiteamur* implies a *non nisi confiteamur*, if we confesse our sins God will forgive them, implies that unless we confesse, God will not forgive. Conditionall promises bind not to performance, till the condition be fulfilled: and such a promise is this pardon here promised with an if, *If wee confesse*: of necessity therefore we must confesse, if ever we desire to obtaine the pardon promised. *Dum tacui inveterantur ossa mea*, saith the Psalmist, *tacuit confessionem*, *non tacuit miseriam*, He concealed not his misery, that he complained of all the day long, and bitterly too, his complaint was roaring; *through my roaring all the day long*: yet all this while he felt no ease, *for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is like the drought in Summer: quia tacuit confessionem*, because he concealed his sins. At last he resolves to confesse, *Dixi, confitebor*; & presently came a pardon: *I said I will confesse my sins unto the Lord, ve. 5. and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sinne: non vis ut ille damnet? tu damna; vis ut ille ignoscat? tu agnosce*, if we would have God forgive us, we must condemne our selves; if we would have him pardon, we must confesse: & good reason for it; should we sin, and have a pardon without confessing, it could not stand with the wisdom of God, for so he should have lost the honour of his mercy; had he not required of us *confessionem peccatorum*, he had never had *confessionem gratiarum*; God therefore, that hee might be

Psalm. 32. 3.

Reas.

1 Sam. 15. 30.

sure to have at the least the thinne reward of thanks for his mercy, requires that we should make known our misery, before he would shew us his mercy; that we should confesse our finnes, before he would forgive us our iniquities. Nor will every confession serve the turne; Not *Pharaoh's* hypocriticall confession, who in a fit of melancholy, sayes, *I have sinned*; but assoone as the hand of God was remooved, is resolved to sinne yet more: Nor *Saul's* slight confession, onely lest *Samuel* should dishonour him before the people. Like some in Saint *Augustines* time, who confident enough of their owne innocency, would yet with their neighbours for company say, *forgive us our trespasses. Scio quia justus sum, sed quid dicturus sum ante homines?* For their righteousness they were of the Pharisees mind, 'twas exact enough, they need not cry God mercy, yet because other Publicanes say their prayers, they are content to say with them, God bee mercifull unto us sinners, to avoide the censure of pride and arrogance.

Psalm. 50.

Others againe worse than these, are free enough to confesse their finnes, but 'tis with pride and glorying. *Stulti quasi per lusum operantur iniquitatem*, they make a sport of committing finnes, and then make a jest of confessing them. This confession is worse than their other finnes: for either they think there is no God to regard, which is flat Atheisme; or which is worse, with them in the *Psalm*, that he is full as bad as themselves, one that delights as much to heare their impieties, as they joy either in acting or confessing them: no such confession must

wee

wee make, if wee hope for pardon. But our confession must be better conditioned. 1. It must bee *humilis accusans nos ipsos*. Wee must accuse our selves, not laying the blame on others. 2. It must bee *penitens & cum dolore*, with griefe and sorrow for them. 3. *Integra & perfecta*, wee must confesse all our sinnes wee know, not willingly concealing any. 4. *Cum proposito obediendi*, with a purpose of obedience for the time to come.

First our confession must bee *humilis & accusans nos ipsos*, acknowledging not the fact onely, but the guilt; confessing not onely the sinne, but confessing it to bee our owne. If wee confesse our sinnes, saith the Text. 1. *Nostra peccata, non natura*, our sinnes, not laying the blame on Nature. 2. *nostra peccata, non Diaboli*, not with Eveshifting them off to the Diuell. 3. *nostra peccata, non Dei*, our sinnes, not making God the Author. —

We must confesse our sinnes, *non natura*, not laying the blame on nature. There were some in Saint Augustine, that when they were convinced of their sinnes, answer'd thus for themselves, *non mirum si dedimus sum fornicationi, quia talis creatus sum natura & fragilitatis*; no great matter if I have committed adultery, my naturall inclination tempted me to lust; and no wonder if I commit murder, my cholericke disposition forceth mee to wrath. *Feminarum vox est*, as Saint Ierome saith in an other case, it is a womanish excuse, and a cloake for our sloth, to say, I could not resist, the temptation was so strong; for wee might resist, if remembering our vow in Baptisme, wee would fight manfully against it; and it is not

not want of strength, but want of will that makes us so easily vanquished. *Manichæus est qui dicit hominem peccatum vitare non posse*, it was the error of the *Manichees* to say that man could not avoyd sinne. *Nos vero didicimus*, saith Saint *Ierom*, but wee have learned from the constant doctrine of the Catholick Church, *hominem semper & peccare, & non peccare posse*, that at all times man may sinne, or not sinne if hee will. Those naturall lusts and passions which are unavoidable, and those suddaine motions which cannot bee prevented, are not imputed to us, God doth not charge us with them: so saith Saint *Chrysostome in opere imperfecto*, upon those words, If a man lookes upon a woman to lust after her, hee hath committed adultery in his heart: *Non si quis concupiverit secundum inevitabile desiderium carnis, sed si quis concupiverit secundum voluntatem animæ, & consensum, statuens implere quod cupit, ille adulter est*. These naturall lusts are no finnes, if wee check and stopp them before they exceed the bounds of reason: then and not untill then are they * counted finnes, when we freely cherish those desires, and resolve to bring them into act. And therefore when wee sinne, wee cannot justly accuse our naturall inclination, but our wills: our naturall inclinations may incline us to sinne, but the sinne is * ours by willingly consenting. And therefore if wee will speake truly, we must confesse our finnes, accusing our selves, not our naturall inclination: that first. Secondly wee must confesse our finnes, acknowledging them our owne, not putting them upon the Devill: the
Devill

* To wit, in Gods gracious account according to the rule of the Gospell.

* Rom. 7. 17, 20.

the power of Absolution.

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Devill may tempt us, hee cannot force us to sinne; if hee could, wee might justly plead, they were none of ours, but his: but if the Devill had such power, *Saint James* would never have said, *Resist the Devill, and he will flee from you*: tempt us hee may by propounding outward pleasant objects to the senses, and that is *tentatio exterior*. Again he tempts by instilling secret suggestions, and that is called *tentatio interior*: *sed in potestate hominis est tentanti non consentire*, man hath power by the grace of God to resist those temptations, and it is our consent that giveth sinne the birth. The sinne therefore is not properly the Devils, who only tempts to it, but ours who freely consent and commit it; he is someway guilty of the sinne, because he is a tempter, and therefore had his curse for it, *Gene. 3.* but to speake properly wee are the sinners that commit the sinne: and therefore the Devils curse freed not *Eve* of hers, *v. 16.* Nor must wee think to excuse our selves by saying, The Devill did tempt mee, and I did eat, but since the sinne is ours, wee must in humility confesse it; *si confiteamur peccata nostra, non Diaboli*; if we confesse our sinnes, not shifting them off to the Devill: that is the second. Thirdly We must confesse our sins not making God the Author, *Confitebor adversus me iniquitates meas Domino*, *Psal. 32.* I will confesse my sinnes unto the Lord, but against my selfe, not against him. *Saint Augustine* upon this place complaineth of some in his time, that would confesse their sinnes, but against God, not against themselves: when they were told of their faults they would re-

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ply, *Deus hoc voluit, quid ego feci?* God would have it so, and how could I help it? without his grace: wee cannot avoyd sinne, and therefore if hee will not preserve us by his grace, wee that can doe nothing without it, what offence doe wee commit, wherein are wee to blame? I wish there were not some amongst us of this minde, who though they will not in plaine termes, yet *per circuitum*, in effect say full as much: but let them heare what Saint Augustine sayes; *Licet nil consequi possis sine misericordia illa quam repellis, potes tamen liberè tenere gratiam, quâ retinenda potes evitare culpam*; although wee cannot of our selves avoyd those finnes without the grace of God, yet wee might, if we would have that grace which would enable us to avoid them. *Non ideo non habet homo gratiam, quia Deus non dat, sed quia homo non accipit*: and if man hath not this grace of God, the want is not in God who freely offers, and invites us to it, but in our selves who wilfully refuse it, and put it from us. *Idcirco culpa nostra est, quia fugimus gratiam*; therefore when we sinne, the sinne is ours, who flie that grace which followeth us, and never leaves us but with griefe: *Quoties volui & nolulistis!* say not thou therefore, *hee hath caused mee to erre*; for *hee hath no need of the sinfull man*: and let no man say, *Hee is tempted of God*, for God cannot bee tempted to evill, neither tempts hee any man; but every man is tempted, when hee is drawne away of his owne lusts: then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sinne. Since then our lust conceives the sinne, we must needs owne it, and confesse, if
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Ecclef. 2.

S. Iam: 1, 14.

the power of Absolution.

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wee confesse truly that the sinne is ours, not Gods, accusing our selves, not making God the author: and that is the third. The second condition of our confession is, it must be *pœnitens & cum dolore*. It is not enough to say, I have sinned, but with Saint Peter wee must goe out and weepe. The Saints of God they did so, *Iobs eyes poured out teares to God, Davids eyes gushed out a flood of waters, which made his bed to swim. Mary Magdalen wept teares enough to make a bath for our Saviours feet; & S. Ambrose telleth us of some in his time, that did sulcare fronti lachrymis*, that furrowed their face with their teares. Weeping and teares were then in fashion. *Sozomen* tells us in his 7. booke and 16. chapt. that the pœnitents then did *cum planctu & lamentatione semet ipsos in terrā pronos projicere*, that they lay prostrate upon the ground weeping & sighing, as unworthy to look up to heaven, till the Bishop came & raised them up: but this publick *ἐξομολόγησις* is out of fashion now, and 'twere vaine for me to perswade to it: but *Iob's* tears, *David's* rivers of water, *Mary Magdalen's* weeping are good patterns for us now. Or if that be too much, if our eyes cannot with *Iob* poure forth tears, nor with *David* gush out rivers of water, *Nonne stillabit oculus noster*, shall not our eye afford one drop, or twaine? there is no sin so small but would fetch a sigh from our heart, and a teare from our eye, if we wel considered whom it offended: it greives the holy Spirit, and shall not wee greve for greiving him? it made our blessed Saviour sigh, and sweat, and bleed, and die, and shall not we sigh for it, which made him die? it greives our heavenly father, hee

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Iob 16. 20.

Psal. 6. 6.

Ephes. 4.

Confession of sinnes, and

is sorry for our offences, and shall not we mourne for that which makes him sorrowfull? if wee doe not, our confession is not right, not as it should be, and in vaine doe wee hope for pardon, for such a drie and dull confession. It is true, *if we confesse our sinnes*, God will *forgive* them, but not unlesse we confesse, *pœnitenter & cum dolore*, with griefe and sorrow: and that is the second condition of true Confession, it must be *pœnitens & cum dolore*, with griefe and sorrow for our sinnes.

3. Our Confession must be *integra & perfecta*, we must not confesse by halfe acknowledging some, and concealing others, but freely all that we can remember; *hee that saith he hath no sinne, hath no truth in him*, saith S. Iohn: and hee that denyes any one sinne that hee knowes hee hath committed, hath but little truth in him; and the God of truth will not pardon such as will not speake the truth from their heart. All our sinnes therefore must be confessed; *omnia venialia, omnia mortalia*, so say the *Casuists*: all sinnes of weakenesse, all sinnes of presumption, all must bee confessed, if we would have God to pardon all. *Scio Deum inimicum omni crimini: quomodo ergo qui crimen reservat, de alio recipiet veniam?* God is an enemy to every sinne, and will not pardon any if wee willingly conceale but one: his pardon is generall, hee never forgives one sinne but he forgives all, and our confession must bee answerable, we must confesse not one but all, that after diligent search and examination wee finde wee have committed. For secret sinnes that have slipt out of our memory and cannot

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II

cannot be recalled, God does not require a particular Confession, but a generall acknowledgement in grosse is enough : *Lord cleanse thou mee from my secret finnes*, wipes off all those. But the *Casuits* put us a case, what if wee bee doubtfull either first of the fact, whether we have committed it or not, we feare wee have, but cannot certainly bee resolved; or secondly of the guilt, the fact we confesse, but cannot withall our skill determine whether it bee a sinne or not: willingly wee would confesse if wee thought it were sinne, but cannot be resolved of that. Shall we now in humility downe right confesse that we have offended? No. *Deus non agnoscet mendacem istam humilitatem*, God likes not that false humility. *Cum humilitatis causa mentiris, si non eras peccator antequam mentireris, mentiundo efficeris quod vitaras*. This very confession against our conscience makes us sinners, if we were none before. What then, shall wee deny, it and say, wee have not sinned? Noe, that is full as bad or worse.

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Response

The *Casuits* give us this rule, since the sinne is doubtfull, confesse it so: if wee question the fact, and cannot remember that, yet feare least wee have committed it, confesse it with a *si feci*, if I have done it, Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. Againe, if wee remember the fact, but doubt of the guilt, and cannot with all our diligence be resolved whether it were a sinne or not, confesse it then with a *si peccavi*, if it be a sinne which I have committed, then Lord bee mercifull to mee a sinner. Thus they teach and not without ground: for in confession wee are witnesses against our selves before the throne of
B 3 justice,

Confession of sinnes, and

justice; and therefore must doe, what witnesses are bound to speake, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as God shall help us. And this is the third qualification of our Confession; it must be *integra & perfecta*, wee must confesse all our sinnes, not willingly concealing any.

4. Our Confession must be *cum proposito obediendi*, with a purpose of obedience for the time to come. Not every one that confesseth, but *he that confesseth* and forsaketh his sinnes shall have mercy. As good say nothing, as say I have sinned, unlesse wee resolve to doe so no more. *Nil prodest homini confiteri, si mens ab iniquitate non revocetur*, 'tis to no purpose to confesse our sinnes, unlesse we resolve against them for the future. And as wee confesse that wee have turned from God by sinning, so wee must professe our purpose of turning to God by obedience. *Against thee, thee onely have I sinned*, saith the Psalmist; there is his confession of his sin: *Create in mee a cleane heart, ô God, and renew a right spirit within mee*; that speakes his purpose of obedience. *Lacrimavit Ephraim*; there is his contrition; *Converte me Domine, & convertar*, there is his desire of conversion and obedience. Actuell amendment, good workes done; these are the worthy fruits of penitent Confession, no part of it: but *votum obediendi*, a purpose of amendment, a resolution of doing good workes is no fruit, but an integrall part of this confession. And therefore wee never finde any man in the way of Penance confessing his sinnes, but ever his first question is, *quid faciam?* what must I doe? Saint Paul his first words when hee began, *quid oportet me*

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Prov. 28.

Psal. 51. 4.

Ierem. 31. 18.

me facere? the Gaolers first words when hee began to repent, what shall we doe? say all the people to Saint *Iohn*, when they came to the Baptisme of Repentance. The light of reason prompts us, that as wee have wronged God, and displeased him by doing amisse, so wee must endeavour to appease him, and make him amends by doing well: As wee have dishonored him by our sinnes, so wee must endeavour a restitution, and glorifie him by our good workes; and hee confesseth not aright that wants this resolution: for true confession is not without hearty contrition, and contrition includes a vow of obedience. Saint *Paul* teacheth so much. Godly sorrow, saith hee, *operatur timorem*, it workes a feare of offending him whom wee greive to have offended already; and *operatur vehemens desiderium*, it workes an earnest and hearty desire to please and content him, whom wee sorrow that we have displeased and injured: Here is a feare of denyall, and a desire of doing well, both which make up perfect obedience, and both these in this godly sorrow which worketh repentance. So then hee that feares not to offend, that desires not to please, never sorrowed from his heart, and hee that thus never sorrowed, never truly confessed: for true confession implies contrition, and so by consequence a purpose of obedience. *Peccavi, quid faciam tibi?* it is the language of every true penitent, *I have sinned, what I shall doe unto thee o thou preserver of men?* if burnt offerings were desired; hee would spare for no cost: thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee. If labour and service will content, hee will

2 Cor. 13

Job 7. 20

Psal. 51

will refuse no hardship, *fac me mercenarium*, saith the prodigall; *Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to bee called thy saine, make me as an hired servant*, set me to taske, I will willingly beare the heate and the burthen of the day to regaine thy lost favour, or else *dic quid faciam, Domine?* Let God but say what he would have done, and he is resolved, whatsoever God shall command that will he heare and doe; and this is the last condition of confession, it must be *cum proposito obediendi*, with a purpose of obedience.

Thus have we seene the nature of confession, and by that learne how to confesse: *sed ubi confessorius?* where's a Confessor all this while? where is any to take our confessions? here is none in the text to confesse to, if we had a minde to it: None indeed expressly named, but here is one plainly enough described, here is one that can pardon our sins, that can purge us from all our iniquities; and to whom can we better confesse, than to him that hath the power of absolution? would you know who this He is? *I even I*, saith God, *am he who blotteth out all your iniquities, and that forgiveth your sinnes*: to him, even to him then let us confesse: be sure, this is necessary, and no pardon to be hoped for, unlesse we confesse to him at least. But there is another Confessor that would not be neglected. *Qui confiteri vult, ut inveniat gratiam, querat sacerdotem, scientem solvere & ligare*, saith Saint Augustine; He that would be sure of pardon, let him seeke out a Priest, and make his humble confession to him; for God, who alone hath the prime and originall right of forgiving sinnes, hath

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day to the church.

p. 226. 227.

James Manus

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hath delegated the Priests his Judges here on earth, and given them the power of absolution, so that they can in his name, forgive the sinnes of those that humbly confesse unto them. But is not this blasphemy, said the Scribes once? Is it not Popery, say some with us now? Take the counsell that is given in *Iob cap. 8. verse 8. Enquire of the former generations, aske the Fathers, and they shall tell thee.*

Aske then Saint *Chrysostome*, and heare what hee saith in his fifth Homilie, upon these words of *Esay*, *I saw the Lord sitting upon a Throne*: what is comparable (saith he) to the power of the Priest, to whom Christ hath said, *whatsoever yee shall binde on earth, shall be bonnd in heaven, and whatsoever yee shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* ἀπὸ τῆς

γῆς τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς κρίσεως λαμβάνει ὁ οὐρανός, ἐπειδὴ ὁ κριτὴς ἐν τῇ γῇ καθίσταται, ὁ δεσπότης ἐπέταται τῷ δούλῳ, ὡς ἂν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κρίνει, τὰ αὐτὰ ὁ κύριος ἀνω κερύσσει.

Heaven waites and expects the Priests sentence here on earth: for the Priest sits Iudge on earth, the Lord followes the servant, and what the servant binds or looses here on earth, *clave non errante*, that the Lord confirms in heaven: words so cleare for the judiciary formall Absolution of the Priest, as nothing can be said more plaine. Please you next to enquire of *St. Ierom*, who is said to be the Patron of that opinion, that holds the Priests power barely *declarative*, and so indeed, none at all: yet he speaks home, in his Epistle *ad Heliodorum de vita solitaria*. God forbid, saith he, that I should speake a word amisse against the Priests, *Quo sacra ore corpus Chri-*

*He sayth the King
but not in your
name*

*you had better
say nothing
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Do it in his sense,
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in Plal. 38.

sti conficiunt, that is in the holy Eucharist; *per quos nos Christiani sumus*, that is in Baptisme; *Qui claves regni calorum habentes, quodammodo ante diem iudicii judicant*, that is by remitting or retaining sinnes. He that can *construe judicant*, and understand what it signifies, needs no comment upon the words. Heare next what Saint Gregorie the great saies in his 26 Homil. upon the Gospells, *Apostoli principatum supremi iudicii sortiuntur, ut vice Dei quibusdam peccata retineant, quibusdam relaxent*; the Apostles and in them all Priests were made Gods Vicegerents here on earth, in his name to retaine and forgive sinnes, not declaratively onely, but *judicially: animarum iudices fiunt*, as he goes on, they are made the Iudges of the soules of men, casting the obstinate downe to the gates of Hell, by the fearefull power of excommunication, and lifting the penitent into Heaven by the blessed power of Absolution. And he is no better than a *Novatian* that denies it, saith Saint Ambrose. I could name more Fathers, as Saint Augustine, Saint Cyprian and others, but I spare. These I have nam'd, are enough to give testimony of the former generation, men too pious to be thought to speake blasphemy, and too ancient to be suspected of Popery: but to put all out of doubt, let's search the Scriptures; looke into the 20th. of Saint Iohn, ver. 23. *Whosoever sinnes yee remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sinnes yee retaine, they are retained*; here is plainly a power of remitting sinnes granted to the Priest, by our blessed Saviour: nor can it be understood of remitting sinnes by preaching as some expound it, nor by baptizing,

baptizing, as others guesse. For both these, preach and baptize, they could doe long before: but this power of remitting they receiv'd not till now, (that is after his resurrection:) that they could preach and baptize before, 'tis plaine. Preach they might, they had a licence for it; Saint *Matth. 10. 7.* as yee goe, preach, saying, &c. and baptize they could and did, *Iohn 4. 2.* Though *Iesus* himselfe baptized not, but his Disciples: but this power of remission in the text, they receiv'd not till now, (that is after his resurrection) as appeares, first by the ceremony of breathing, by that signifying that then he infus'd that power into them which he bade them receive; and secondly by the word *receive*, which he could not properly have used if they had beene endued with it before. So then it is not the power of preaching, or baptizing which is here given the Apostles, but as the Fathers interpret the place, a peculiar power of pronouncing, as Gods deputed Iudges, pardon and remission to the penitent, a power of absolving from sinnes, in the name of God all such as penitently confesse unto them: a forme of which Absolution our holy Mother the Church, hath prescribed in the visitation of the sick. He then that assents to the Church of *England*, or beleeves the Scriptures, or gives credit to the ancient Fathers, cannot deny the Priest the power of remitting sinnes: and since he can in the name of God forgive us our sins, good reason we should make our confession to him. Surely God never gave the Priest this power in vaine, he gave it for our benefit, and expects that we should doe the best we can to make use of it, ha-

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ving ordained in the Priest the power of absolution, he requires that we should use the best meanes we can to obtaine that blessing: now the onely meanes to obtaine this absolution is our confession to him. The *Priest* may not, nor cannot absolve any but the penitent, nor can he know their penitence, but by their outward expression, it is Gods prerogative to know the thoughts of the heart, the Priests eye cannot pierce so farre, he onely reades the sorrowes of our hearts by our outward confession, without the which we cannot receive, nor he give the benefit of absolution. *Pœnitentiam igitur agite qualis agitur in Ecclesiâ*, Confesse as the Church directs us, confesse to God, confesse also to the Priest, if not in private, in the eare, since that is out of use, *male aboletur*, saith a devout Bishop, 'tis almost quite lost, the more the pittie; yet how ever, confesse as the Church appoints publickly before the Congregation, that so we may at least by this reap the great benefit of absolution: and if wee slight this, heare what Saint *Augustine* saies, *Tom. 10. Hom. 49. Nemo sibi dicat, Occulte ago, quia apud Deum ago, &c.* Let no man flatter himselfe, and say, I confesse in private to God, and God that knowes my heart will pardon me, though I never at all confesse to the Priest. *Ergo sine causa dictum esset, Quæ solveritis in terra, &c.* Hath God in vaine said, *whose finnes yee remit, they are remitted?* hath God in vaine given the Priest the power of the Keyes? *Frustramus ergo verbum Dei?* shall wee by our wilfull neglect goe about to make void the promise of Christ? God forbid! If we have offended this way already, *præ-*
veniamus

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veniamus iudicium Dei per confessionem, the onely way to prevent the terrible judgement of the last day, is timely to confesse our sinne to God, and to the *Priest*: for if we confesse in humility our sinnes with grieve and sorrow for them; if wee confesse them faithfully, not concealing any, and with a purpose of amending our lives; be our sinnes what can be, they cannot be so great, so grievous, but God will forgive them. Saint *Ambrose* doubts not but *Indas* sinne as great as it was, might have beene forgiven if he had confessed to his Saviour, as he did to the Iewes, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood*. Say not then with *Cain*, *my sinne is greater than can be forgiven*: for if thou canst confesse it aright, never feare forgivenesse, unless thou conceivest (which is impossible) that it is greater, than either the truth, or justice of God; for *if wee confesse our sinnes, hee is faithfull, and just to forgive us our sinnes*, saith the text. Nor say, I have sinned too often to be forgiven, *Numerus non vincit gratiam*, the number of our sinnes cannot exceed his mercy; if we sinned a thousand times, confesse as oft, and hee that hath commanded us to forgive our brother, as oft as hee shall repent, will certainly forgive us. The text is not if we confesse *once or twice* he will forgive us, but indefinite, *if we confesse our sins*, how great soever, how often soever committed, *hee is faithfull and just, to forgive us our sinnes*; if we with the prodigall confesse, *Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy sonne*, the Father of mercies will behold us with the eye of pittie, will melt us with his grace, embrace us with the

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have sinned, the
so he had beene

the armes of mercy, will owne us for his sonnes, and
 cloath us with the robes of righteousnesse, and last-
 ly will *slay the fatted Calf* that we may eat and
 be merry: our blessed Saviour who was slaine from
 the beginning of the world, shall be slaine as it were
 a fresh in the Sacrament, that we eating his flesh,
 and drinking his pretious blood, may be made
 merry with the taste of those joyes here,
 with which we shall be fully sa-
 tisfied hereafter. Amen.

To God the
 Father, God the Sonne, God the Holy
 Ghost, be all honour, and glory,
 praise and thanksgiving both
 now and evermore,
 A M E N.

FINIS.



